Project Report

on

Web Design Analysis

and Recommendation

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# Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to do an in-depth review of the design principles of www.Stripe.com, the webpage of one of the leading payment processing companies, against the design principles such as format, layout, accessing aids, use of white space, navigation and other best practices discussed in the book “practical strategies for effective communication”.

The company is famous for its well documented API and ease of use. We will take a closer look at the stripe.com website and evaluate the user experience. The report utilizes the various techniques discussed in the book such as text and image proximity, text alignment, design repetition and color contrast to evaluate the design of the website as well as look at important features such as sitemap, navigation menu and links to the other parts of the website. The evaluation results are highlighted at the end of report as well as some recommendations for site developers for future reference.

# Introduction:

While new tools and technologies have been introduced to streamline the process of developing a website, formatting the webpage to meet user experience design standards has always been a challenge. One of the key reasons is the content and the structure of the websites are usually built after the internal structure of the tools, rather than the users’ needs. Secondly, the content itself often needs to be adapted to the web, especially when it is originally intended to be provided in a printed form. Finally, web pages are sometimes not subject to the same quality measures for printed materials, due to the lower cost of creating the former. With the recent advent of laws such as the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), it’s important that companies invest in designing websites that are clean and easy to use for the visually impaired.

Through my research I observed that a good design allows the user to be able to learn the basic navigation options of a web page and find their desired content easily. A good design pattern also allows the user to be able to reach content in an efficient manner and remember the navigation options if they happen to return to the website after a while. Users are also guided to follow the correct links until they reach their desired content, and if they happen to make mistakes during this process, they are able to recover by going back to their previous location easily. One such example is www.stripe.com, the official webpage for the company Stripe. Stripe is one of the most popular payment processing companies in the world with over $350 billion dollar in Total Payment Volume. Their website has gone through many iterations over the years and the current iteration is a perfect example of how a website should be built with keeping design principles and accessibility in mind.

I wanted to determine the best approach to developing a user accessible website. In order to achieve this, we developed a plan of performing the following tasks:

* Determine if the website makes good use of the design principles
* Determine if the website makes good use of design aids
* Determine if the website makes good use of space
* Determine if the website is easy to navigate and search
* Determine if the website makes accommodation for readers

Not only did these tasks helped in objectively evaluating the website, but it also helped in creating a framework that anyone can use to develop new websites or revamp existing websites to meet the accessibility and design standards. The report expands on this and is organized as follows. We first discuss the various methods used to evaluate a web page and measure stripe.com against those methods. We then evaluate the results of the evaluations, make conclusion based on those results and highlight recommendations to the webpage developers for future reference.

# Methods:

In this section we evaluate stripe.com web design against the methods mentioned in the textbook to find out what works and where are some opportunities for improvement.

## Task 1: Determine if the site makes good use of design principles

I began my research by scrolling through the front page of the website, taking notes of instances where the text and relevant images were close together and where they were not to find any discrepancies. I also specifically made notes of the with headings and subheadings to evaluate if they were properly aligned and that the text below the subheadings were relevant to the headings. Finally, I made notes of the typography and color repetitions as well as color contrast to determine if the contrast helped the user understand which section they were on and whether they were able to focus on the important information.

## Task 2: Determine if the site makes good use of accessing aids

The next step was taking notes of any icons that was used by the website to describe an action or a product. I also made notes of all instances of gifs and pictures to assess whether the moving images were relevant and helped the user understand the business proposition and the various products offered by the company

## Task 3: Determine if the site makes good use of space

My research so far was around colors and text, the next step was to determine how cluttered the website is by measuring the white space used throughout the website. One way of determining the use of negative space is by measuring the padding around the text and images as well as between the sections to determine how much space each object has and how it affects the overall layout and aesthetics.

## Task 4: Determine if the site is easy to navigate & search

In order to evaluate how easy, it is to navigate the website and to search for and understand all the tools, technologies and products offered by the website, I looked at navigation menu, search bar or search icons, sitemap and FAQ sections. I also made note on whether the navigation menu was consistent across the different sections of the company webpage as well as a link to the homepage on each of these sections. Finally, I also searched for links to additional information of the website such as API documentation, legal disclaimers, leadership team and contact information on the website to determine how easy it would be for a user to get all the relevant information and make an informed decision on whether the company is a good fit for their use case.

## Task 5: Determine if the site makes accommodations for readers

One of the key features I wanted to test the website against was the ease of use for visually impaired. For this task we tested the website against commonly used web accessibility assessment tools such as color filter (<https://www.toptal.com/designers/colorfilter>) and a11y color contrast accessibility validator (https://color.a11y.com/) to determine how accessible the website is for users who are color blind. I tested the website for all forms of color blindness including “protanopia”, “deutanopia” and “tritanopia” and made note of the results.

The other thing I tested the website was on whether there was an option to automatically translate the website to a different language. This was to ensure that users who are not native speakers of English language have an option to digest the information in a language of their choice. Another point of consideration was whether there were contact forms that needed to be filled out in order to contact a representative versus a phone number or email that was already provided in the contact description on the website.

We also looked at any and all videos that were available on the website to observe whether closed captions were provided to make it easy for users with hearing impairment to be absorb the information.

# Results

Now that we have evaluated the website against the standards, we will outline the results of the assessment of the four different tasks mentioned in the previous section.

## Task 1: Determine if the site makes good use of design principles

When you open the webpage of stripe you are greeted with a colorful webpage with a summary at the front. The image right next to the description shows a demo of the payment processing software conveying the idea that this is a payment processing business. The text and images are also aligned in an organized way.

The examples of companies that use Stripe’s services are stacked as large company logos. The use of white and blue colors is consistent throughout the webpage giving the sense of cohesiveness and uniformity. As you scroll down the page you notice the contrast of black and white as background color which separates the different sections. The use of bold blue text color draws attention to the services provided by the Stripe and how they differentiate themselves from competitors.

## Task 2: Determine if the site makes good use of accessing aids

The website makes use of icons, gif and images that explain to the user the different functionalities their product provides. An example of this is the gif that shows how stripe creates a payment processing webpage for a person to be able to buy a product (beauty product as an example) and pay using a credit card.

Another observation was when you hover over the menu section on the top it has icons right next to the link and one-line description explaining what this link will be about.

## Task 3: Determine if the site makes good use of space

The design and layout of the website is minimalistic. Each section uses white space, separating the various parts of the website. The website has a very light vertical lines going across that uniformly divides the page into four sections.

Each horizontal section also has a heading and subheading, the heading being of smaller font and the subheading with a larger font highlighting the value add the product will bring to the user.

## Task 4: Determine if the site is easy to navigate & search

On the very top of the website is the navigation menu bar with four main sections; “Products”, “Use Cases”, “Developers”, “Company” and “Pricing”. Hovering on individual items on the menu bars shows you even more options such as details about different product and services offered, various partners who use stripe’s services, the about page of the company etc.

On the very bottom right of the page is the site map. It has links to information including legal and contact information which is not available on the other sections of the website.

The navigation menu is consistent throughout the website, except for the developer documentation section which feels like its own website and focuses more on the technical aspects and use the top navigation to help a developer seek the resources they need. The bottom section is also consistent throughout the website with links to resources including a link to the forum and 24x7 phone number to contact a client services representative.

## Task 5: Determine if the site makes accommodations for readers

We assessed the website by first testing it for how accessible it is for folks who are color blind by using the following tool: <https://www.toptal.com/designers/colorfilter>. We tested for all forms of color blindness including “protanopia”, “deutanopia” and “tritanopia”, and the results were 100% compliant with ADA. The website was also scrutinized by a11y color contrast accessibility validator, a tool used to check for compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, and it passed 3 out of the 4 validation tests done by the tool.

When analyzing the videos hosted on the website, it was observed that most of the videos were hosted on youtube and had built in auto generated closed captions, but all of the videos were missing curated closed captions as well as subtitles in various languages.

When clicking on “Contact our Sales” team, we were brought to an online form that needed to be filled for the user to be able to contact a member of the sales team. No other means of communicating to the sales team was observed on the website.

No traditional FAQ sections were observed, instead a link called “support” navigated to a page where there were list of articles and search button where you could find more articles based on the search term

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# Conclusions

The website overall does a fantastic job of adhering to common design best practices as well as caters to the people with visual impairment challenges. Below I have outlined the reasons as to why I think the website has done a great job with following the best practices evaluated in the methods section.

For the first task, which was to analyze if the site makes good use of design principles, we evaluated the website based on the criteria of proximity, alignment, repetition and contrast. We observed that the website does a good job of aligning relevant text and images together, aligning the sections and text in a way that makes it organized and easy for users to understand. The use of purple and black color fonts to highlight important sections of the website is great and the black and white contrasts to highlight and differentiate various sections of the webpage is commendable

When analyzing for the task of use of accessing aids, it was observed that the website made good use of fonts, each section of the navigation menu had an associated icon next to it. The gifs next to the website also did a really good job of explaining to anyone not familiar with the company as to what sort of services the company provides.

Each section also had a nice heading and subheading explaining the various features and value add the product brings to a user. The padding of whitespace around each section and around text and images gives a sense of uniformness and clarity.

The navigation bar was consistent across all pages on the website which was really helpful for users. The site map was one of the better site maps I had observed with plethora of links to various sections including legal details, contact information and more details about the company and financial performance. The website however lacked a search functionality on the front page which would have been really useful for someone unfamiliar with the company or for users who want to search and compare a specific product offering from the company.

The stripe.com website was able to test all visual accessibility tests with flying colors which proved that the web designers and really given a lot of thought to color blindness and other visual impairments. However, the videos hosted on the website didn’t had curated closed captions or subtitles in different languages thus making it difficult for folks who either had hearing impairments or whose native language is not English to be able to absorb the information from the videos.

Also, when navigating through the contact sales options, it was observed that the only way to contact someone was through filling out a web form thus making it difficult for people who might not have access to a keyboard or have writing disabilities to be able to contact someone for assistance easily.

# Recommendations

Overall, the minimalistic design and the use of colors throughout the website is fantastic. However, I think one place where the website could have done a better job is to maybe use a different color to highlight import sections such as “signup now” or “payment plan” as they kind of mesh in if you scroll through the website quickly.

Another opportunity to make some improvements to the design is to have a dedicated FAQ section which could be added to the top navigation bar as well as a dedicated search button on each page of the website that would allow users to be able to search for a particular topic without having to navigate multiple pages and links to get the relevant information.

Finally, I think the contact section is where the website could use an overhaul. The insistence on filling up a web form to be able to contact a member of sales team seems outdated, instead a better option would be to either have the contact information available as pdf that could be downloaded or a phone number highlighted in bold text making it easier for people to be able to contact member of the sales or support team.